

Kerridge determined to get post office restoration moving



By [Matthew Kelly](#)

October 9 2024 - 5:00am

[0 Comments](#)



Kerridge determined to get post office restoration moving

The new lord mayor, Ross Kerridge, says he will do everything in his power to progress the restoration of the former Newcastle post office.

Dr Kerridge has met with the building's owner, Jerry Schwartz, to discuss the project, which has become bogged down.

The failure to meet publicly stated timelines has drawn sharp criticism from within the community.

Dr Kerridge said he shared the community's frustration.

"I've met with Jerry Schwartz a few times. I'm as frustrated as anyone with what's been going on and how long it is taking, but I am reassured by him that he is genuinely committed to delivering a good outcome for the building," he said.

"I'm happy to do whatever I can within the law to get this progressed as fast as possible."

Dr Schwartz said on Monday that he was waiting on the City of Newcastle to approve a minor Section 4.55 modification to the building's plans, which were first approved in April 2021.



Jerry Schwartz inspecting the building in 2021. Picture by Max Mason Hubers.

"Once this is approved we can essentially submit the construction certificate," Dr Schwartz, who bought the building from the Awabakal Local Aboriginal Land Council for \$3.5 million in September 2018, said.

"I wish to reiterate that I have no intention of land banking this property. I want it to come back to life and make money for me."

A City of Newcastle spokesman said a modification application was lodged on May 20 that proposed to amend the approved design to add an additional level and to allow an onsite residence.

"Since then, the modification application has changed and now doesn't include a caretaker's residence," the spokesman said.

"City of Newcastle wrote to the applicant at the time seeking additional information, which to date has not been received."

Dr Schwartz and Dr Kerridge, who are both medical practitioners, also discussed creating an Aboriginal medical museum in the building's basement.

Start the conversation

Have your say.

Leave a comment below and let us know what you think.

[Be the First to Comment](#)

It builds on an earlier plan to have Indigenous cultural museum incorporated into the redevelopment of the 1903 heritage jewel.

In another development, it is hoped a 17 metre by 10 metre [working model of Newcastle's 1960s railway network](#) can be permanently displayed on the ground floor.

The ground floor will also contain shops and a cafe, while the top floor will be converted into a function centre.

While there hasn't been much to show for Dr Schwartz's efforts in recent years, the building is in overall good condition.

Dr Schwartz paid [\\$18,000 to have 1.28 tonnes of pigeon poo removed](#) and metal mesh installed in August 2022. [He also paid \\$100,000 to replace the building's original copper drain piping that was stolen.](#)

Approval was recently given to undertake minor roof repairs.

A Newcastle architecture firm was enlisted in February 2023 to progress the project following the retirement of the original architect.

Almost every aspect of the work relating to state significant heritage building has required detailed investigation and input from specialist consultants.

The project will need to be referred to the heritage branch of the Department of Environment and Heritage before it can be submitted for certification.

A heritage impact statement that accompanied the 2020 development application said the proposed interior works would preserve the original features associated with the former post office, particularly the main postal chamber.

The statement noted the building was a "landmark structure" that made a strong contribution to the aesthetic character, historical value and amenity of the East End.

The building's exterior sandstone is considered to have weathered well and remains a highlight of Newcastle's historic inner-city buildings.

"The building also forms an important group of buildings in association with the former police station and former public works building displaying the work of four colonial and NSW government architects," the report said.

